

Must Remain in
Transcription Room

M 2595 A

Sunday, July 13, 1975

Firefly House

A Conversation with Edna White

Edna White: --when they recorded at one of the Planning Board meetings and it was a shock.

MR. NYLAND: People usually don't like it, you know, and they really think they sound much different--

Edna White: Yes.

MR. NYLAND: --from the way (they) actually hear it.

Edna White: Yes, you don't hear yourself the way you sound to other people.

MR. NYLAND: Well, of course it is not actually the recording of the voice--

Edna White: It isn't?

MR. NYLAND: --because it is limited. Yah. Since it's mechanical, it depends a little bit on the kind of microphone there is, but sometimes they just take out the high notes and the voice doesn't sound right. So one cannot be blamed.

Edna White: Well, I'm glad to hear that.

MR. NYLAND: But usually you don't really remember what you have said. And then when you hear it, you say, Oh, yes, that's right, I did - things of that kind. But one gets used to it.

Edna White: Yes, I'm sure that this is true.

MR. NYLAND: You know, we understand on the crafts, really handicraft, things that we do with our hands, and which involves in that kind of work, a certain attitude on the part of people who want to make something lovely and beautiful, as craftsmanship. And in that way, we try to explain that the attitude of such a person has to be harmonious as far as he himself is concerned, so that he can actually give, in that what he is trying to make, everything that he wants to (give) and that he (gives) in that kind of creation. And that the totality of himself, as he thinks about it and wants to make something of that kind, which can be useful at the same time and perhaps has a purpose for, let's say, children, or for--just for beauty's sake, that that also has to have a feeling of himself in it. And that in addition, of course, it has to have the dexterity of his hands of being able to make it.

Now when he makes it, he's not primarily interested in selling it. He wants to make something beautiful that, for him, has a value and that can contain, to some extent at least, part of his life, his inner life. And it's really the way how he is and what his life represents for him, in the creation of something that's lovely for him and that he hopes that that might be appreciated also by other people who will look at it. So that, you might say, in turn when they look at such a piece of work of craftsmanship, that they also become affected to some extent because of the beauty or because of something that it represents, or that it evokes in them something that is more worthwhile for themselves as far as their reality is concerned.

By reality, we mean that a person is not only just the way he walks around and the way he behaves, but that there is something else which we call his inner life or his spiritual existence, or the beginning of the development of his spiritual existence. And that by means of craftsmanship and the acquisition of dexterity and the wish constantly to be there, to be, as it were, present totally of himself in wanting to make it, he really doesn't consider any other questions. He doesn't consider how much value it's going to be and how much it would have to cost, or whatever people would like to pay for it. I think it enters, to some extent, like it enters in all kind of work of art because you cannot blame an artist for creating a statue, hoping that he will be able to sell it, that is, for a certain sum of money. But the principle is really that a person gives himself into that what he is making, and sometimes it may take him a long time to develop something, to make something that is worthwhile for him, that he feels it is right, without any thought of how he even can live. And the question is that this whole commercial aspect of having made certain things and--like a machine would make it or making many objects of the same kind, it loses then the value of a handicraft.

So our way of philosophy is based on the development of a totality of a man and to see if, in that kind of development, he can actually become a different kind of a person in a combination of the three different parts which are inherent in each person. And those three parts we call the centers of his activity, either physical or emotional or intellectual. And the more there is of any one of those three in the making of that what he is doing, the more the product will be a representation of his real aim.

You see, we base the philosophy on a possible development of a man to

become more harmonious. We call it harmonious when there is an equilibrium within himself as far as his intellectual and emotional aspects are concerned. And that then his life, the way he is in his daily living, will express exactly that as a motivation within, and coming out then as a form of behavior which is harmonious in relation to that what he is within himself. So one tries to eliminate all forms of hypocrisy, or lying, or even indulging in any kind of a form of vanity. And that the whole idea of work like this, and we call that work on oneself, is to produce something that could become a man of a, let's call it, of a higher grade, a different kind of level, a little (further) level, and where he himself understands that many things have to be overcome which are, you might say, just ordinary and which are not very becoming to him, that he then has to have a struggle within himself of really becoming as a man ought to be.

You see, this is the basis of the philosophy of Gurdjieff, that a man is not what he is now, and we call that simply, he is still in an unconscious state and that there is a potentiality of a conscious and conscientious state which a man has to work for under the influence of forces which are higher than he is, and which are benevolent regarding such an attempt. And in that sense, you see, it becomes a religion because it has to do with a conduct of how one actually is, how one behaves, what one is in ordinary life, and motivated by that what is more pure within a person as an emotional state of a very definite quality, and an intellectual understanding of what is required for such a man to become more in equilibrium, more harmonious, more real as a man ought to be.

So you see that working in that way and making things in that way has a tremendous effect of an influence on what a person actually could become.

And working then together with others, and not having this commercial aspect in mind than only perhaps that he makes some things and he wants to continue with what he is doing, of course he wants to put again back into money whatever he has put in in materials. But the real thing is what he put in himself, and that is almost something that cannot be appreciated in terms of money.

The appreciation is in terms of beauty, or that what is lovely, that what is really something extraordinary. And I think that each good craftsman, particularly a handy - that is, a man who uses his hands in that kind of craft - has really that as an aim. It's not that he wants to be admired but he wants to make beautiful toys for children, he wants to make certain things that have a good shape like in pottery, and colors and glazes and whatever designs there are on it. It is for the sake of the beautification of that. And I would say that this kind of handicraft is gradually getting out of--out of - it is neglected. It is not encouraged enough. We are too much already machine-made, and we substitute plastic for something that should have been wood. And the (good), the beauty of certain things doesn't exist anymore than only to make money in order to sell much, in order to make some more, in order to make some more money.

That is really what we're after: to try to establish something that is much more valuable for a person in his own life, so that then in his own relationships, whichever they may be, he will be able to, let's call it, to be content, to be at peace within himself, and then because of that, can create a certain atmosphere which is much better than the ordinary superficiality of TV or radio or whatever nonsense books he is reading. It is to create a level for a man that he actually can live with himself, and ultimately I hope that he needn't be ashamed of what he actually is and the way he per-

forms. It's very closely interwoven with that philosophy. And it's not so easy to explain it sometimes because one has to--(is) primarily not so much interested in the possible spiritual development. But when it is a development that becomes really an unfolding of that what is potentially in a man, then there is a possibility that he becomes a real man and, as such, he will be more of value even to society. And he will be what a man ought to be and not just a little bit of a talking machine.

You understand what I mean?

Edna White: Yes. I think it's a very beautiful philosophy. The one thing I might add or question is for you to explain why the crafts themselves are the expression that you seek - among others, I understand.

MR. NYLAND: Well, with the others there is a difference, mostly (it is) the crafts we talk about regarding this problem, because that is where we are quite definitely non-commercial and the emphasis is the making of it. I say, for instance, if you make some toys for children, you don't have in mind that you want to sell them. You have in mind that the (play) can be made by a child because the little thing that you make as a toy is appreciated by such a child.

Edna White: Well, this is the connection between the man that you're talking about with the harmonious--

MR. NYLAND: That's right.

Edna White: --expression of his qualities--

MR. NYLAND: That's right.

Edna White: --and the outside world. And that's what I would like to see perhaps as a justification for the crafts as part of your--

MR. NYLAND: Well, I think it is a justification--

Edna White: Yes.

MR. NYLAND: --because it's exactly that--

Edna White: Well, all I'm saying is, I can understand this. I think it would be useful to have it on record.

MR. NYLAND: Well, it is all right. Perhaps what I've just now said, that it is recorded. It might be. Is it still running (on)? Because I don't know how long the (tape is).

Answer: Yes.

MR. NYLAND: It's still running. This would be more or less in the nature of it, wouldn't it?

Edna White: Yes, I believe it would. And if you could just emphasize why crafts, rather than meditation, for instance, or music--

MR. NYLAND: Oh, it's a different way. Crafts - meditation is also one of the different aspects of reaching a state of spiritual life, very much the same as prayer is, very much the same as gathering together and just sitting without saying anything, or sometimes just an exchange of wanting to work together for an aim of building a house. Or like they had for building cathedrals and churches. All of that are different means for a development of that what is latent within a man and could be developed. And we call it simply, and in general, any religion will call that a possible spiritual unfoldment. So it is not limited to crafts. Craft is only one means by which it can be done. We have different ways.

For instance, we have movements. That is, exercises of a sacred nature, temple dances, we call them. And when there are a group of people who are trying to do that in accordance with certain rules as prescribed, together with music that belongs to it, it brings them to a certain elevated state.

And they start to realize that there is something else in them that also could be wakened up and usually is not awakened by ordinary life because we are too, as it were, too fat. And this goes deeper, and brings out of a person that what really is his essential value. And there are many different ways by which it can be encouraged and started and even instigated, but it has to be triggered off in some way or other, and crafts is one of the ways by which one becomes active in regarding that attempt. And during the activity, a person is able to see himself do that and to see that that what he wants to make is really that what he hopes for and what he has imagined it could be. And usually the attitude in craft is very definitely the same as in creation of art. One makes paintings in order to put into that some idea, sometimes of oneself, sometimes of God, sometimes of nature.

Edna White: Yes, it seems very close to a philosophy of art, too.

MR. NYLAND: Yah, it is very close. That's why I say it is really not so difficult to understand because we're all familiar with ordinary, I call it ordinary forms of art, different forms of art, like music and painting and elocution and sculpture and beautiful things that have been created in the name of whatever we would call it, (kn) the name of their God. But you see, this craft is a little closer to a person. He can learn to understand it, and with that it becomes very much more individual instead of just having a general (fare) of people in a church. They can combine in that attempt, but it is a little difficult to become personally involved in it.

If one is personally involved in a prayer to one's own God, you can establish a relationship at that time for that particular person so that he can benefit by his prayer. And I would say, making things that are lovely and beautiful is like a prayer, because a person in that attempt puts his

best foot forward. And he really wants to give something of his own and perhaps he hopes that that what he can give is more than his own, that he is spirited in some way or other by something else of a--of a higher nature, without any doubt, or even godlike.

Edna White: Dr. Nyland, do you think everyone is capable of this--

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Transcribed:	Jessica Haim
Rough Type:	" "
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